

Do not destroy

The official letter arrived yesterday in the mail. The envelope said: “Do not destroy. Official Document.” I thought to myself, “This must be important. Maybe there is a surprise check inside. I looked closer at the envelop window and it revealed a multitude. It stated: “SPECIAL NOTICE: You have been selected to represent Republican voters in Mississippi’s 4th Congressional District. This is not a U.S. Government document. DELIVER EXCLUSIVELY TO: Mr. Michael Tracey. Census Document Registers to: “ This was followed by my name and address.

Out of curiosity, I opened the “official” letter and discovered a two page letter from Michael Steele, Chairman of the Republican Party. It was printed on both sides. It was titled “2010 Congressional District Census: Commissioned by the Republican Party.” In three places in the letter, he asked me to make a financial commitment of “\$25, \$50, \$100, \$250 – or even \$500”

The Chairman reminded me that he had enclosed a census form that I should fill out because “the answers you give will help us win races for Governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress and other key campaigns all the way down the ballot.”

Realizing the weigh my answers may carry, I decided to check out the census form that was enclosed. The four-page census form proved interesting. It even had a “Census Tracking Code” which looked very similar to the code on the official Census form I had returned weeks earlier.

The first section wanted to know my “Political profile.” They were interested in my voting habits; my age, what media outlets I watch and was I concerned “that the Democrats have total control of the federal government.” Section II of the survey dealt with the economy, taxes, social security, education, energy, immigration and other issues. Section III asked how I felt about the economy, stimulus bill, federal deficit, tax cuts, health care, global warming and other issues. Section IV dealt with national defense and Section V dealt with “Census Certification and reply.” In other words, send money according to the suggested amounts mentioned several times already. If I couldn’t send money now, maybe I could enclose “\$15 to help defray the cost of processing my Census Document.” Of course, if I did wish to send money I could use any one of a selected group of credit cards. Of course, it would be helpful if I listed my occupation, my telephone and email address. At least, my completed census form could be mailed back in a prepaid envelope.

After glancing through the census form, I was in a quandary. Should I answer it honestly by revealing my supposed political leanings. Should I return it with “no opinion” response checked off?

At least, I felt privileged to have been singled out from thousands of other official census form responders to receive such an official document from people who were very interested in my views.

I wondered how many other lucky persons received similar census forms and how they might respond.

Through it all, I was left with one nagging problem. I cannot vote. So, my response, if I entertained the idea of filling out the census form, would be useless.

I love the recent tactics of some magazine publishers who sent me a “free complimentary issue” and then follow up later with a bill as if I returned its “postage paid” card indicating I wanted to begin a subscription to the magazine.

I also love it when publicity companies send me free pens and various samples, hoping that I might place an order. I also receive phone calls from church supply stores and vestment providers indicating that they will be in the area in the near future and wish to drop by and show me their latest creation. I simply invite them to continue passing by.

All this reminds me that maybe there is something that is really free provided you don’t entertain the “special offer” that may be attached to it.

Now, I can hear our commercial paper shredder crying out. It has not been fed this morning. So, I need to feed it and keep it happy as I feed it my latest “Do not Destroy. Official Document.”